**Policy:** ***A principle or course of action chosen to guide decision making.***

**Plan:** ***A method or scheme for achieving or doing something.***

# Executive Summary

## Overview

Washington's transportation system connects us to our families, friends, neighbors, jobs, and communities. Transportation is also the key to economic development, connecting businesses with customers and suppliers. Washingtonians live and work in the most trade-dependent state in the country, and our transportation system links Washington to the global economy.

This complex infrastructure network includes ferries, airports, highways, roads, streets, sidewalks, bike paths, trains, and buses. Individuals, businesses and governments—from counties and cities to ports, transit agencies and tribal nations—all own and operate parts of our state's transportation system.

### Washington Transportation Commission Vision

Washington's transportation system should serve our citizens' safety and mobility, the state's economic productivity, our communities' livability, and our ecosystem's viability.

This transportation plan is focused on moving people and goods, regardless of travel mode or public or private ownership of transportation systems. Moving away from the historical practice of taxing and building our way out of congestion or to satisfy the demands of growth, this 20-year Plan warns that as we grow, we must grow smarter and be more innovative; there is not enough state or local money and land to build our way out of congestion.

Using current information and data, the Washington Transportation Plan (WTP) identifies a $67 billion transportation investment over the next 20 years to build our state's economy, meet citizen's social and recreational needs, and enhance personal health and safety.

Even after the recent significant transportation infrastructure investments supported by voters, the Governor, and the legislature, this Plan projects a nearly $38 billion shortfall in meeting the identified $67 billion need. Given the size of this unmet need, the WTP builds on three key findings and sets priorities for future spending and projects statewide. First, the existing system cannot be allowed to deteriorate. Second, we must build on the strong safety record we have achieved. Future investment must also focus on economic vitality, mobility, and personal and environmental health.

## Funding and Investment Strategy

Current funding for the 20-year WTP period provides almost $29 billion dollars for transportation investment. The 2003 (Nickel) funding package raises $4.7 billion over 10 years and the 2005 Transportation Partnership Act raises $9 billion over 16 years. Despite this significant investment, this Plan projects nearly $38 billion in unfunded need. Recognizing the difficulty of securing this much revenue, the Transportation Commission has taken a strategic approach to future investment, making targeted, prioritized investments to achieve the greatest benefit with limited funding.

## Investment Guidelines

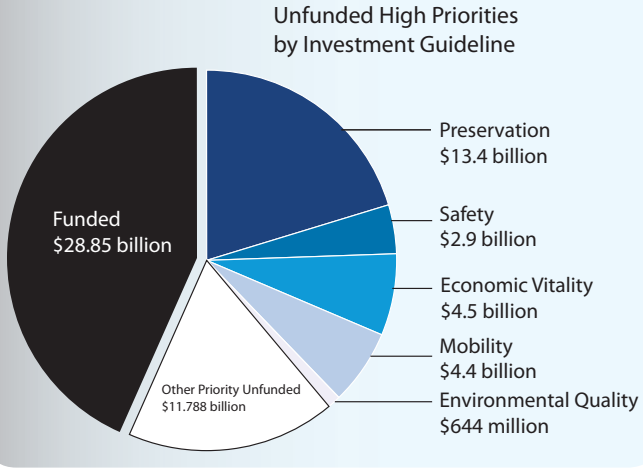
**1. Preservation—**Preserve and extend prior investments in existing transportation facilities and the services they provide to people and commerce. Most investment in preservation of existing infrastructure also addresses the other priorities, by improving safety, economic viability, mobility, and the environment.

**2. Safety—**Target construction projects, enforcement and education to save lives, reduce injuries, and protect property.

**3. Economic Vitality—**Improve freight movement and support economic sectors that rely on the transportation system, such as agriculture, tourism, and manufacturing.

**4. Mobility—**Facilitate movement of people and goods to contribute to a strong economy and a better quality of life for citizens.

**5. Environmental Quality and Health—**Bring benefits to the environment and our citizens' health by improving the existing transportation infrastructure.




This Plan also sets the stage for incorporating more data and a more flexible, adaptive approach toward projecting and meeting future needs. Over the last year, major changes unfolding in the global economy have significantly raised construction costs. Early reactions by individuals, businesses, and governments to the reality of increased energy costs and global warming indicate lower gas tax revenues over time. This rapid cost escalation of construction materials and fuel, occurring simultaneously with accelerated efforts to reduce reliance on oil-based transportation fuels, serves to remind us that the assumptions underlying transportation planning and revenue sources over a 20-year period are volatile and uncertain, requiring frequent reexamination.

## Key Findings

These key findings restate the main comments we have heard during public outreach:

**Mobility—**The mobility of people and goods is fundamental to the functioning of society. Investment must shift from moving vehicles to moving people and products. To provide acceptable mobility in a society that is increasing in population and tied closely to the global economy, transportation systems require constant, innovative, and repeated attention to operations, maintenance, and investment.

**Priorities —**The amount of additional investment, on top of existing resources, required to meet the state's projected needs is nearly $38 billion in the next 20 years. Because that entire amount is unlikely to be available at one time, priorities must be established. First, the existing system cannot be allowed to deteriorate. Accordingly, preservation continues to be the first order of business. Second, we should build on the strong safety record we have achieved. Improvements are also needed to enhance the state's economic vitality, its general mobility, the health of its citizens, and the environment in which they live, work, and play.

**Innovative Solutions—**There are limits to how much revenue can be raised through the gas tax. Innovative technological, operational, and planning solutions can lower costs, target revenue generation, and impact strategic planning for the future. User fees, availability of optional transportation modes, and efficiencies in operating the existing transportation system may all benefit from implementing the latest technologies. Innovation should also facilitate readily

available alternative transportation, including bicycles and walking, which conserve energy and contribute to personal health.

## Key Policy Recommendations

In addition to the strategic priorities outlined above, the Transportation Commission makes several policy recommendations in the WTP. Some of the most critical are:

**Funding—**
Identify strategies and methods to provide sustainable revenue sources for transportation.

**Safety—**
Identify cost effective ways in which the state and local agencies responsible for safety on highways, streets, and roads can coordinate their efforts to achieve statewide safety goals in a comprehensive manner.

**Basic Access—**
Develop a policy that defines the state's role and level of investment in public transportation for those who do not or cannot drive.

**Congestion Relief —**
Develop a state policy and strategy to maximize traffic flows on the state's most congested highways. Assess the cost and benefit of expanding transit systems as a means of improving the overall utilization of street and road capacity.

**Washington State Ferries—**
Use the state ferry finance study to identify the desirable percentage of funding that current revenue sources should achieve to support sustainable ferry operations. Identify innovative financing approaches aimed at meeting the long-term capital investment needs of the ferry system.

**Transportation and the Economy—**
To identify the contributions to the different regions and economies of the state, measure the impact and benefit of transportation investments and define the state's role in making investments, considering cost and benefit trade-offs. Identify the transportation system elements that are critical to maintaining and improving Washington's global competitiveness.

**Land Use and Transportation—**
Improve concurrency between transportation and land use decisions to ensure complementary development of land with transportation infrastructure. Clarify the state and local responsibility and options for addressing highway congestion that **are** driven by local permitting decisions.

**Reduce Reliance on Fossil Fuels—**
Develop a state policy on alternative fuel development and use which could include the identification of possible regulatory and tax structures. Also, identify opportunities and strategies for addressing the growing demand for alternative fuels.

**Rural Economic Vitality—**
Improve farm-to-market access by investing in rail improvements and/or defining the state's role in establishing and funding a year-round, statewide, core all-weather road system in rural areas.

**Emergency Preparedness—**
Clarify the role of state and local governments in providing personal mobility and freight service in the event of a major disruption to the transportation system or in case of unanticipated catastrophic events.

## The Future—Where do we go from here?

The most important next step toward a better transportation future requires a paradigm shift in our state's transportation policy framework. We cannot build our way out of congestion, nor meet the demands of growth. Instead, the state and cities, counties, tribes, ports, and transit agencies must coordinate and work as partners to invest what we can where it makes the most sense.

In 1990, transportation congestion and the inability of cities, counties, and the state to meet the transportation needs of the fast growing population was the driving force behind the Growth Management Act (GMA).

Although the state as a whole makes better decisions today than before GMA was in place, its mix of incentives and disincentives does not go far enough in affecting individual actions that impact our transportation system. Improving the mobility of people and goods requires focused and strategic partnerships between government and business to address land use and the everyday decisions people make about where to work, live, and recreate.

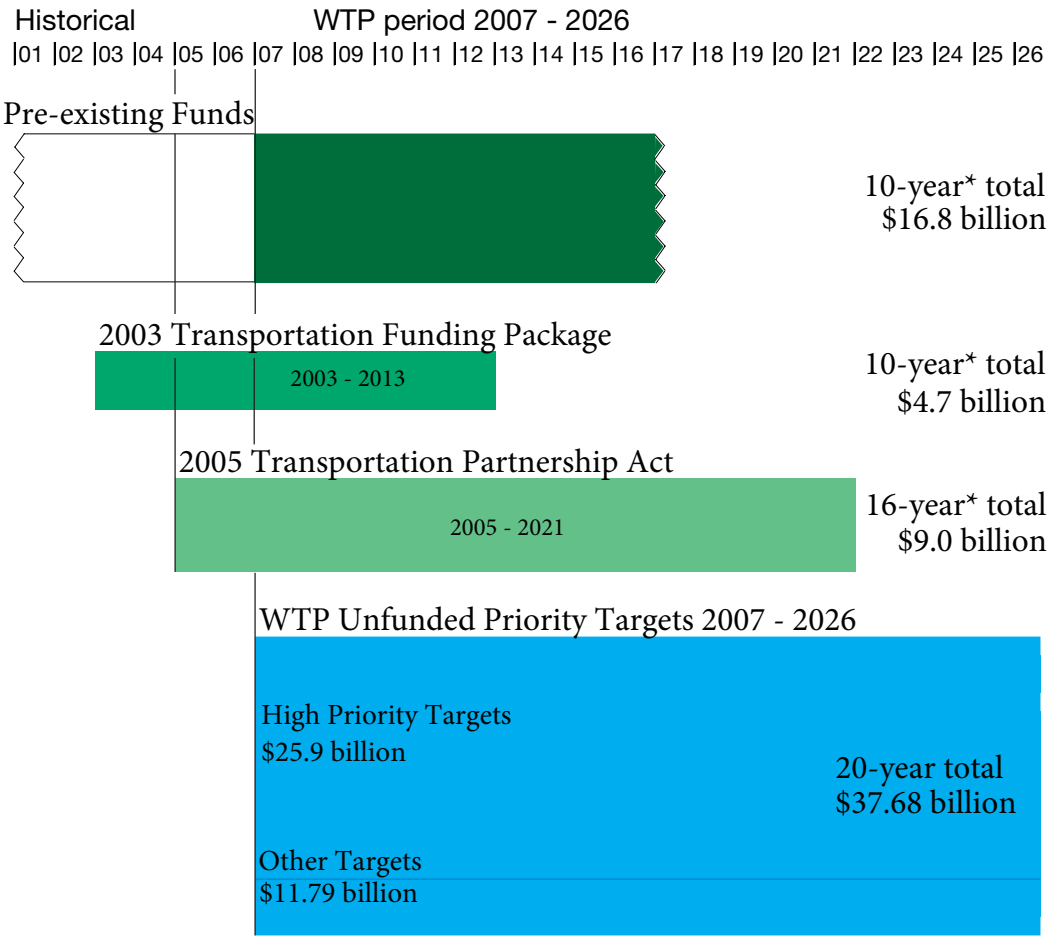
Several major studies, including the Commission's tolling and rail studies, support the WTP and strategies for innovative solutions. The WTP incorporates financing recommendations from the tolling study, identifies some of the issues that underlie the policy study on funding stability and the ferry finance study, and data from the rail study and review of GMA requirements that transportation improvements occur concurrent with development.

In the near future, the state must tackle how to address innovative funding and financing opportunities and challenges. These include increased usage of pricing and tolling to respond to citizens' tax concerns; public and private investment in rail and other transportation modes; revenue slippage due to use of alternative fuel sources; and the overall uncertainty of system demands and revenues. Stronger and more consistent partnerships among levels of government and the private sector are needed to conceive and bring transportation improvements to closure.

This Plan is not a budget or a project list; nor is it the 10-year investment plan. Rather, it provides a new direction and a foundation for the future.

As the projects currently underway move forward and the investment priorities are implemented, future planning efforts will build on what we learn about system operations, the pace and challenges of global warming, and the opportunities and limitations of different travel modes

**WTP Priority Investments and Current Funding**
**20-Year Outlook—2005 dollars**




Source: WSDOT Gray Notebook and Transportation Planning Office

* A 10-year total is shown for pre-existing funds because the Transportation Commission proposes and the Legislature typically enacts a 10-year investment program. The 2003 and 2005 funding packages were enacted for the periods specified.

such as rail, bike, and transit. We expect to adjust plans, priorities, and investment strategies over time as we test and evaluate innovative technologies, funding and financing tools. Just as adaptive management, an iterative data-driven process, is used in many natural resource management activities in the Pacific Northwest, a flexible and adaptive planning approach should help effectively improve mobility, connectivity, and safety in our transportation future.

For more detail, see the full Washington Transportation Plan at www.wsdot.wa.gov/planning/wtp or call the Transportation Commission at 360-705-7070.